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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [PGOV](#) [BE](#)

SUBJECT: CONCERNS OVER SIGNS OF GROWING ANTI-SEMITISM IN  
BELGIUM

Classified By: CDA Wayne Bush, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: The head of the umbrella organization of Jewish organizations in Belgium told the Charge and Pol/Econ Counselor on March 11 that he was concerned by signs of growing anti-Semitism in Belgium. Joel Rubinfeld, head of the Comité de Coordination d'Organisations Juives de Belgique (CCOJB), requested the meeting with the Charge after seeing and documenting what he described as anti-Semitic slogans in some of the demonstrations protesting Israeli actions in Gaza at the beginning of the year and the presence of senior Belgian political figures in the event. He was accompanied by a prominent Jewish-American businessman resident in Belgium. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) Rubinfeld said that Jews had long been integrated in Belgium, having been an integral part of the diamond trade in Antwerp for centuries. Jewish communities were used to seeing protests against Israeli policies and, as such, did not object when the protests were clearly reflecting public criticisms of the actions of a particular Israeli government. He said many Belgian Jews could also be critical of steps taken by particular Israeli governments.

13. (C) However, what had disturbed him recently was what had occurred at a large demonstration in Brussels protesting Israeli actions in Gaza. He personally documented what concerned him and provided photographs to demonstrate his concerns (and provided a set to the Charge). One photograph showed what looked like Auschwitz with a sign in front saying "Gaza Now!" Another was a poster with swastikas equating Jews with Nazis. Another had the skull of an apparent orthodox Jew inside a burning Star of David with a swastika next to it. Others equated Gaza with the Warsaw Ghetto or termed Gaza the New Shoah (holocaust).

14. (C) What particularly worried Rubinfeld was that a number of Belgian political leaders attended the demonstration. He said that although there was nothing to associate any of them directly with the anti-semitic posters, he was concerned that none of the political leaders denounced those posters after the demonstration when reports describing them were publicized. According to his photos, the head of the francophone socialists, Elio Di Rupo, and the former socialist Defense Minister Andre Flahaut, were both present, as were other political leaders.

15. (C) Two days before Rubinfeld's visit, a man described as North African in appearance had attacked four Jewish men in Antwerp, hitting them with a rod before running away. There had also been isolated incidents against Jewish targets, including against a mosque in Brussels.

16. (C) The Charge told Rubinfeld he was very concerned by what he was hearing. He noted that he was beginning a series of official visits to regional capitals throughout Belgium and that he would raise the issue of anti-Semitism with the governors and mayors he met on the visits. He would also

include the issue in his regular meetings with top Belgian officials.

¶7. (C) COMMENT: There was a definite upsurge in anti-Israel sentiment in Belgium during Israel's attacks on Gaza. Belgium, like other European countries, continues to have citizens with anti-semitic views. The Embassy will continue to monitor these developments closely and raise our concerns with Belgian officials both to heighten their sensitivity to the issue and to reduce the likelihood of such incidents in the future.

BUSH